

GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT

LEGEND

- **L** - LIBERTARIAN PARTY
- **R** - REPUBLICAN PARTY
- **D** - DEMOCRATIC PARTY
- **G** - GREEN PARTY
- **B** - BETTER PARTY

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

- Chase Oliver / Mike ter Maat (L)
- Kamala D. Harris / Tim Walz (D)
- Donald J. Trump / JD Vance (R)
- Jill Stein / Rudolph Ware (G)

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE - DISTRICT 3

- Jordan Rowden (L)
- Bethany E. Mann (D)
- Bob Onder (R)
- William Hastings (G)

U.S. SENATOR

- W. C. Young (L)
- Lucas Kunce (D)
- Jared Young (BP)
- Josh Hawley (R)
- Nathan Kline (G)

GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

- Bill Slantz (L)
- Crystal Quade (D)
- Mike Kehoe (R)
- Paul Lehmann (G)

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

- Ken Iverson (L)
- Richard Brown (D)
- Dave Wasinger (R)
- Danielle "Dani" Elliott (G)

MO SECRETARY OF STATE

- Ryan L. Munro (L)
- Elad Jonathan Gross (D)
- Andrew Bailey (R)

MO STATE REPRESENTATIVE - DISTRICT 60

- Dave Griffith (R)
- Jamie Howard (D)

MO STATE TREASURER

- John A. Hartwig, Jr. (L)
- Mark Osmack (D)
- Vivek Malek (R)
- Reagn Haase (G)

COLE COUNTY ASSESSOR

- Tim Theroff (R)

COLE COUNTY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR

- Ralph Jobe (R)

COLE COUNTY SHERIFF

- John P. Wheeler (R)

COLE COUNTY COMMISSIONER - DISTRICT EAST

- Jeff Hoelscher (R)

COLE COUNTY COMMISSIONER - DISTRICT WEST

- Harry Otto (R)

AMENDMENT 2

- **Yes** - for the amendment will amend the Missouri Constitution to permit licensed sports wagering regulated by the Missouri Gaming Commission and restrict sports betting to individuals physically located in the state and over the age of 21. The amendment includes a 10% wagering tax on revenues received to be appropriated for educational institutions
- **No** - against the amendment will not amend the Missouri Constitution regarding licensed regulated sports wagering.

AMENDMENT 3

- **Yes** - for the amendment establishes a constitutional right to make decisions about abortion and contraceptives and allows abortion to be restricted or banned after Fetal Viability except to protect the life or health of the woman.
- **No** - against the amendment will continue the statutory prohibition of abortion in Missouri.

AMENDMENT 5

- **Yes** - for the amendment will amend the Missouri Constitution to allow the Missouri Gaming Commission to issue an additional gambling boat license to operate an excursion gambling boat on the Osage River, between the Missouri River and the Bagnell Dam.
- **No** - against the amendment will not amend the Missouri Constitution regarding gambling boat licensure.

AMENDMENT 6

- **Yes** - for the amendment levy costs and fees to support salaries and benefits for current and former sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys, and circuit attorneys to ensure all Missourians have access to the courts of justice.
- **No** - against the amendment will not amend the Missouri Constitution to levy costs and fees related to current or former sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys and circuit attorneys.

PROPOSITION A

- **Yes** - for the proposition will amend Missouri statutes to increase the state minimum wage beginning January 1, 2025 to \$13.75 per hour and increase the hourly rate \$1.25, to \$15.00 per hour beginning January 2026.
- **No** - against the proposition will not amend Missouri law to make changes to the state minimum wage law.

Summary

- **Immigration: Republicans** generally support tighter border security and deportations of immigrants who entered illegally. **Democrats** generally support fewer barriers to entry and decreased deportations, placing greater importance on creating pathways to legal status for people who came here without legal documentation, especially as children (a.k.a. “Dreamers”). While you likely have no control over U.S. border policy, you are an important part of Christ’s mission to demonstrate his love for the world. Reflect his inexhaustible compassion by humbly and unconditionally loving your neighbors here and abroad.
- **Crime: Democrats** generally advocate for a comprehensive overhaul of the criminal justice system, attributing violent crime primarily to underlying causes such as poverty, lack of education, and mental health issues. **Republicans** generally advocate for “tough on crime” policies, attributing violent crime primarily to the criminals’ poor choices rather than societal or systemic causes. Amidst a dark world where crime and societal turmoil persist, Christians find lasting hope in Christ. The Bible assures us that, even in the face of evil, Christ is our steadfast source of strength and refuge.
- **Healthcare:** The **Republican** Party traditionally believes that free markets foster competition, improve patient experience, and drive health care costs down. **Democrats** generally believe that quality, affordable healthcare is a right, not a privilege, for every American. Believers may respectfully disagree about who should cover the costs of healthcare, but we can agree that our bodies are a beautifully designed gift from the Lord. Stewarding that gift well means taking care of our bodies and compassionately caring for the physical needs of our neighbors.
- **Taxes: Republicans** generally favor lower taxes, believing money is better spent and more impactful in the hands of private citizens. **Democrats** generally favor higher taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations, advocating the increased tax revenue be used to fund more social programs. No matter your stance on tax policy, Christians are called to manage their own finances wisely and to live generously, giving to those in need. Pray for guidance in doing both, and reach out to your local church to see where help is needed.

- **School Choice:** The **Republican** Party platform calls for universal school choice, arguing it empowers parents to educate their children based on what system (religious, academic, or otherwise) they believe is best for their child. **Democrats** generally advocate for increasing public school funding to raise teacher salaries, lower class sizes, renovate schools, and boost academic performance. The government has different priorities than Christians do. While politicians seek to settle the who and how of education's invoice, believers remember that our ultimate teaching goal is to make disciples who love the Lord and love others.
- **The Climate: Republicans** generally rank climate change near the bottom of their policy priorities, saying that Earth's climate has been warming and cooling since the beginning of time and that humans' impact on that change is unproven. **Democrats** generally rank climate change near the top of their policy priorities, often citing a moral obligation to protect the environment for future generations.
- **Gun Control: Republicans** generally favor placing fewer restrictions on gun ownership. **Democrats** generally believe limiting gun access is the best way to reduce gun violence. There is some common ground:
 - 81% support prohibiting a person from having a gun while they're under a restraining order
 - 76% support allowing courts to temporarily remove guns from individuals whose relatives report a risk of harm
 - 72% support requiring gun owners to lock up firearms when not in use

The gun control debate is largely fueled by fear for the safety of loved ones. When you engage with your neighbors, remember to listen for that fear and reflect hope because the gospel delivers courage better than any firearm, or firearm policy, could.
- **Gender Policy:** The vast majority (86%) of **Republicans** believe that gender is determined at birth and that sex assigned at birth should be the basis of U.S. legislation. The majority of **Democrats** believe that an individual's gender can be different from their sex assigned at birth; this belief is highest among younger Democrats (72% of 18–29-year-olds). When discussing divisive topics, such as gender policy, remember that both your stance and *how* you take your

stance reflect on Christ. Being peaceable, gentle, open to reason, and unwavering in the face of culturally hot topics can all be signs of God's wisdom in us.

- **Inflation and the Economy:** While **Republicans and Democrats** largely agree on what economic success looks like, there's disagreement on how to accomplish it. Whether the broader economy is struggling or thriving, Christians should give generously of their time, talents, and resources to those in greater need. Seek out opportunities to give what you have away.
- **Ukraine and Russia: Democrats generally believe the U.S. should financially support Ukraine's effort** to regain lost territory, even if that means a prolonged (and expensive) conflict. **The Republican party is split.** A majority believe the government is overspending on the war in Ukraine and should instead prioritize issues in the U.S. (like the southern border and economy). War is a heavy burden that impresses upon us our world's need for restoration. Jesus came to bear that burden of sin, lighten our load, and restore our world. Pray that those burdened by war would experience restoration and glorify Jesus.
- **Student Loan Forgiveness:** Supporters of student loan forgiveness argue that the U.S. government is holding back 43 million of its own citizens, preventing them from starting businesses, having children, and buying homes. Critics say student loan forgiveness is fundamentally unfair because it uses the tax dollars of people who avoided (or have already paid off) debt to bail out adults who made a legal commitment. No matter your stance on loan forgiveness, Christians are called to manage their own finances wisely and to live generously, giving to those in need. Pray for guidance in doing both.
- **Abortion Laws: Neither of the candidates are pro-life**, that being said, **The majority of Republicans are pro-life**, emphasizing the need to protect vulnerable unborn children. **The majority of Democrats are pro-choice**, emphasizing women's bodily autonomy and abortion as healthcare. **There is (some) common ground.** Since the *Dobbs* decision, surveys consistently find:
 - 80-90% of Americans support exceptions to save the life of the mother

- 70-80% of Americans oppose third-trimester abortions
- **War in Israel and Gaza:** The vast majority of **Republicans** have been staunchly pro-Israel, saying America's longtime ally has a right to defend itself against Hamas, which is explicitly on a mission to destroy the state of Israel through jihad (Islamic Holy War). **Democrats** are more divided. From the onset, some progressives were critical of Israel, saying its mistreatment of Palestinians fueled the rise of Hamas. War and the evil it exposes are a terrible reminder that the world is not as it should be. Seek peace where you are and trust that the Lord will end all war in his perfect timing.

Immigration

U.S.-Mexico Border

The United States-Mexico border has seen a major influx of migrants in recent years (see chart), overwhelming the immigration system and some cities. According to Pew Research, 77% of Americans describe the situation at the southern border as either a “crisis” or a “major problem,” catapulting immigration to a top issue among voters. While most agree the current system is broken, there are disagreements on how to fix it. So, you’re probably wondering, what are the two sides? Glad you asked...

Both Sides

Republicans generally support tighter border security and deportations of immigrants who entered illegally. They emphasize this as a way to reduce crime, protect the American economy, and be fair to those who follow the legal pathway to citizenship.

Democrats generally support fewer barriers to entry and decreased deportations, placing greater importance on creating pathways to legal status for people who came here without legal documentation, especially as children (a.k.a. “Dreamers”).

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris supports creating legal pathways to citizenship and decreasing deportations. The daughter of immigrant parents (Jamaican father, Indian mother), she has advocated for a position of deterrence, securing nearly \$5 billion in funding from the private sector to combat the root causes of immigration (economic instability, crime, etc.) in Central American countries. This year, she supported a bill to increase border security funding.

Former President Trump supports increased border security and wide-scale deportation of undocumented/illegal immigrants. While in office, he began construction on “The Wall” along the U.S.-Mexico border, instituted the “Remain in Mexico” policy, prohibited issuing visas to citizens of 14 majority-Muslim countries, and supported legislation that would have reduced the levels of legal immigration by 50% and imposed a refugee cap.

Terms to Know

Not sure this 200-word explainer made you an immigration expert? Don't worry, we've got (a bit) more. Here are some simple definitions for terms commonly referenced in the immigration debate.

- **Refugee/Asylum Seeker:** Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their home country for fear of persecution. Requesting asylum (typically) allows temporary legal entry into the country until an immigration judge can assess the merits of their claim.
- **“Remain in Mexico” Program:** This program, officially named the “Migrant Protection Protocols,” was a Trump-era policy that required most asylum seekers on the southern border to remain in Mexico until a U.S. immigration judge assessed the merits of their asylum claim.
- **Title 42:** A pandemic-era restriction that allowed the quick expulsion of most migrants in order to “stop the introduction of communicable diseases.” It ended in May 2023 when the public health emergency for COVID-19 was lifted.
- **Dreamers:** Undocumented/illegal immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and were then raised and educated in America. Most have lived the majority of their lives in the United States. The policy protecting “Dreamers” from deportation is called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).
- **Sanctuary City:** A local jurisdiction that limits or denies cooperation with federal immigration authorities seeking to deport undocumented/illegal immigrants.

Eternal Perspective

While you likely have no control over U.S. border policy, you are an important part of Christ's mission to demonstrate his love for the world. Reflect his inexhaustible compassion by humbly and unconditionally loving your neighbors here and abroad.

”After this I looked, and behold, ^ba great multitude that no one could number, ^cfrom every

nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...”

- Revelation 7:9

Crime

Spikes in violent crime in recent years have kept the issue of crime and how to handle it at the forefront of American politics.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program* includes 4 offenses: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—offenses that involve force or threat of force. After historic lows in the 2010s, violent crime increased sharply in 2020, often attributed to pandemic-related economic stress and isolation, as well as social unrest.

Both Republicans and Democrats say they want to reduce crime but disagree on how to best accomplish that.

*Note: The FBI overhauled its database in 2021, which impacted its historical charts and caused many major cities to not submit data in time for 2022's report. The FBI says that data has since been added, and all cities with 1M+ people are reporting data to its new system. Recent reports show violent crime continued to rise from 2020-2022 but declined in 2023.

Both Sides

Democrats generally advocate for a comprehensive overhaul of the criminal justice system, attributing violent crime primarily to underlying causes such as poverty, lack of education, and mental health issues. They emphasize the need to reduce mass incarceration and address police brutality, calling it a “stain on the soul of our nation.” Democrats often advocate for enhancing social services and addressing inequalities, which they believe contribute to criminal behavior, as part of a comprehensive approach to crime prevention.

Republicans generally advocate for “tough on crime” policies, attributing violent crime primarily to the criminals' poor choices rather than societal or systemic causes. They argue that firm, swift punishments deter crime, and many support policies like “broken windows policing” (targeting minor crimes to prevent larger ones) to reduce crime. They generally support stricter sentencing and increased police funding.

There is some history of the two sides working together on this issue. In 2018, the *First Step Act* passed through Congress with broad bipartisan support. Among other things, it aimed to reduce recidivism (a released criminal committing additional crimes) by rehabilitating prisoners and offering early release for nonviolent offenders engaged in training programs.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris advocates for criminal justice reform, emphasizing societal interventions. A former prosecutor and attorney general of California, she co-sponsored the 2020 *Justice in Policing Act* aimed at eliminating cash bail at the federal level. The same year, she said the Defund the Police movement “rightly” questioned the size of police budgets but has since repeatedly voiced support for increasing police funding. Harris opposes private prisons and emphasizes investing in mental health, education, and poverty reduction to address the root causes of crime.

Former President Trump advocates for a tough-on-crime approach, emphasizing stepping up policing and “law and order” policies. He has advocated for a “return to proven crime-fighting methods, including stop-and-frisk” (which allows police to temporarily detain and search individuals based on suspicious activities). His 2020 *Operation Legend* led to over 6,000 arrests and the confiscation of over 2,600 firearms. Trump supports increased funding for law enforcement, expanding immunity for officers, and harsher penalties for violent offenders.

Eternal Perspective

Amidst a dark world where crime and societal turmoil persist, Christians find lasting hope in Christ. The Bible assures us that, even in the face of evil, Christ is our steadfast source of strength and refuge.

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me; God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

- Psalm 23:4; 46:1 (CSB)

Healthcare

Healthcare costs top the list of expenses Americans are fretting over; three in four adults say they are “very” or “somewhat worried” about being able to afford unexpected medical bills or the cost of healthcare services for themselves and their families.

At least 80% of voters say it is “very important” that White House hopefuls talk about their plans for healthcare costs on the campaign trail. So, what are the two sides saying in the run-up to November?

Terms to Know

We'll leave you in suspense and explain some key healthcare-debate terms you should know:

- **Medicaid:** A healthcare program provided by federal and state governments for low-income Americans. Medicaid is the largest source of health coverage in the U.S.
- **Medicare:** A federally funded health insurance program for people ages 65+ and younger people with disabilities.
- **Single-payer healthcare:** A system in which the government is the only payer of healthcare costs (in place of private insurance) and covers all qualifying healthcare expenses from money collected through taxes. This system is used by 17 countries, including Bahrain, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.
- **Medicare-for-All:** A proposal for a single-payer healthcare program in the United States that would replace existing public and private options.
- **Affordable Care Act (ACA):** Also known as Obamacare, this legislation expanded access to Medicaid, created a regulated health insurance marketplace, and required insurers to offer coverage for pre-existing conditions. Since it was passed in 2010, the percentage of Americans with health insurance has risen from 84% to 92%.

- **Universal Health Coverage:** The belief that everyone should have access to quality health services without financial hardship.

Both Sides

The Republican Party traditionally believes that free markets foster competition, improve patient experience, and drive health care costs down. Most Republicans oppose a single-payer system, arguing that the government will make healthcare more expensive, less efficient, and leave patients with fewer choices. While 66% of Republicans think health insurance is not the government's responsibility, 54% want federally funded programs for the elderly and poor to continue.

Democrats generally believe that quality, affordable healthcare is a right, not a privilege, for every American. They are “proud to be the party that passed Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act” and want to see those programs protected and expanded. Among Democrats, 54% favor a single-payer system like Medicare-for-All, while 33% say health insurance should be provided by a mix of private companies and government programs.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris aims to expand healthcare to cover more Americans, building upon Presidents Obama and Biden's policies. During her 2019 campaign, she supported Medicare-for-all but said that in 2024, she would *not* push for single-payer insurance if elected president. She plans to “maintain and grow” the Affordable Care Act and to continue bringing down drug costs by allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug manufacturers.

Former President Trump supports “more choice, better care, and lower costs.” While President, Trump lowered prescription drug prices, expanded access to affordable coverage, and signed a law to end surprise medical billing. He has promised not to cut Medicare spending and criticized the Affordable Care Act, saying he plans to replace it with something “better and less expensive.”

Eternal Perspective

Believers may respectfully disagree about who should cover the costs of healthcare, but we can agree that our bodies are a beautifully designed gift from the Lord. Stewarding that gift well means taking care of our bodies and compassionately caring for the physical needs of our neighbors.

“For you *e*formed my inward parts; you *k*nitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”

- Psalm 139:13-14 (CSB)

Taxes

Last year, Americans paid roughly \$6.5 trillion in taxes across federal, state, and local levels of government; \$4.4 trillion of that revenue went to the federal government. Nearly half of Uncle Sam's federal fundraising comes from personal income taxes, with just over a third coming from payroll taxes (see key terms below).

On the state level, most money comes from income taxes, though Alaska, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming don't have a state income tax. Sales tax is the second-largest source of state revenue.

On the local level, most government revenue comes from property taxes (72% in 2024).

Uncle Sam spends about \$2 trillion more annually than he receives in revenue; this difference is the much-discussed "deficit." Congress is responsible for raising or lowering federal taxes and deciding how much the federal government spends, with disagreements leading to gridlock and potential government shutdown (on what feels like a regular basis).

Both Sides

Republicans generally favor lower taxes, believing money is better spent and more impactful in the hands of private citizens. They argue that reducing taxes for individuals and companies will incentivize them to bring (or keep) money in the United States instead of lower-tax countries. That money can then be used to raise wages and innovate, boosting the entire economy.

Democrats generally favor higher taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations, advocating the increased tax revenue be used to fund more social programs. They emphasize that the economy is "rigged" to benefit the ultrarich and support closing tax loopholes and instituting a minimum tax on billionaires to ensure they "pay their fair share." They generally support maintaining or lowering taxes on the middle and lower classes.

Terms to Know

- **Payroll Taxes:** For most people, this is a 15.3% tax shared by employers (7.65%) and employees (7.65%) taken out of each paycheck. People who are self-employed are responsible for the entire 15.3%, often called the “self-employment tax.” Wages above \$168,600 are exempt from taxes to fund social security (raises to \$174,900 in 2025).
- **Income Taxes:** An income-based tax rate paid by employees to fund local public services like transportation, education, and defense. Most people pay both federal and state income tax, though nine states do not have a state income tax.
- **Sales Taxes:** A tax on the sale of goods and services at a percentage of the purchase price, determined state-by-state. Alaska, Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire, and Oregon skip statewide sales tax. California has the highest state sales tax rate.
- **Property Taxes:** A tax on immovable property like land and buildings and on movable, tangible personal property like cars and equipment. Property tax rates vary state by state, as does the property tax *base* (what is and isn’t taxable).
- **Tariffs:** A tax imposed by one country on goods or services imported from another country. Supporters say tariffs raise revenue, protect domestic industries, and protect national interests. Critics say they drive up prices for consumers and cause trade wars.
- **Child Tax Credit:** Reduces the tax bill for low- and moderate-income parents by up to \$2,000 per child.
- **Capital Gains Tax:** Taxes owed on the [profit after the sale](#) of an asset (like real estate or stocks). Short-term capital gains taxes are paid at the same rate as ordinary income. Long-term capital gains taxes (for assets you’ve held for longer than one year) are lower than the regular income tax rate.
- **Unrealized Capital Gains Tax:** An unrealized gain or loss is the change in the value of a stock, bond, or other asset that has not yet been sold. Some Democrats advocate for taxing unrealized gains on ultra-high net worth individuals (\$100M+).

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris wants to raise taxes on big businesses and Americans making \$400,000 or more annually, pushing President Biden's 2025 budget plan forward. She has promised not to raise taxes on families making less than \$400K, saying the middle class will keep more of their income through Child Tax Credits; she proposes \$3,600/child with a bump to \$6,000 for newborns. Harris has echoed Trump's proposal to exempt tip income from taxation.

Former President Trump has proposed trillions in tax cuts. Trump has promised to expand the tax cuts he enacted in 2017 (set to expire in 2025) and shave at least one percentage point off corporate taxes. He says the loss of revenue will be paid for by higher growth and tariffs on imports—a cornerstone of his economic policy. Trump believes 10-20% tariffs on foreign goods (up to 60% on Chinese goods) will incentivize American manufacturing and create jobs. He proposes a child tax credit of \$5,000/child and exempting tip income from taxation.

Eternal Perspective

No matter your stance on tax policy, Christians are called to manage their own finances wisely and to live generously, giving to those in need. Pray for guidance in doing both, and reach out to your local church to see where help is needed.

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

- Hebrews 13:16

School Choice

In the years since 2020, American discontent with K-12 public education has spread like a case of classroom lice. In 2019, 51% of Americans were “completely” or “somewhat satisfied” with the quality of public school education; in 2023, that number dropped to 36%.

One outcome of this discontent has been increased debate over school choice.

In a traditional school system, taxes go toward funding local public schools. With school choice programs, public funding “follows the child” so that parents receive financial help if they choose to opt out of their local assigned public school in favor of a private or homeschool option.

As of 2024:

- 32 states plus Washington, D.C., have at least one school choice program
- 1.9% of American students use school choice programs
- 71% of Americans support some form of school choice

Both Sides

The Republican Party platform calls for universal school choice, arguing it empowers parents to educate their children based on what system (religious, academic, or otherwise) they believe is best for their child. Republicans argue school choice opens the door to more expensive, academically rigorous education for children in low-income families and creates healthy accountability for schools. They believe the money parents pay to public schools through taxes should be allowed to “follow the child” and be applied to private schooling.

Democrats generally advocate for increasing public school funding to raise teacher salaries, lower class sizes, renovate schools, and boost academic performance. Democrats are somewhat divided on school choice; while 66% are in favor, others believe that school choice undermines the public school system, leaving poorly funded schools—often attended by racial minorities—

even worse off. They argue that taxpayer money should not go to high-income-earning families or religious private schools.

Terms to Know

School choice programs come in different policy shapes and sizes. Here are a few [key terms](#) to know:

- **Charter Schools.** The OG school choice for parents; charter schools are publicly funded schools that don't have the same curriculum or methodology requirements as traditional public schools. Some focus on certain disciplines, like the arts or STEM. Admission is by application (and usually lottery), but tuition is free.
- **Magnet Schools.** Like charter schools, magnets are public schools with specialized curriculum and free admission, but enrollment is based on a competitive admissions process.
- **Education Savings Accounts (ESAs).** The government allocates money into an account that parents can spend on a variety of approved education expenses, like tutoring, textbooks, homeschooling supplies, or tuition. Leftover funds can rollover and pay for future expenses like college. Available in 17 states.
- **Individual Tax Credits and Deductions.** Parents pay for their kids' school expenses and then claim those expenses as a credit or deduction on their income taxes. Available in 10 states.
- **School Vouchers.** Allow parents to access all or part of the public funding set aside for their child's education to put towards private school expenses. Parents choose a private school (whether religious or non-religious), admit their child, fill out paperwork, and the government contributes to tuition (drawing from income and sales tax revenues). Available in 16 states (plus D.C. and Puerto Rico).
- **Tax-Credit Scholarships.** Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide scholarships to private schools. Available in 20 states.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris advocates for raising funding for public schools. She calls for increasing federal funding for schools serving low-income and disabled students and supporting programs like Head Start (subsidized preschool for low-income children). In 2019, she called for \$13,500 raises for teachers and has pushed for more funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Former President Trump supports school choice, calling it “the civil rights statement of the year” in 2020 because “a child’s zip code in America should never determine their future.” His administration’s “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act” allows parents to use funds from a 529 savings account to cover K-12 tuition. Trump supports funding vocational training and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and keeping controversial “culture war” content out of the curriculum.

Eternal Perspective

The government has different priorities than Christians do. While politicians seek to settle the who and how of education’s invoice, believers remember that our ultimate teaching goal is to make disciples who love the Lord and love others.

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ”

- Deuteronomy 6:5-8

The Climate

Climate change is a uniquely heated issue in U.S. politics. There are disagreements not only on what to do but also on how urgent the issue is to begin with.

While most agree that the climate is changing, there is debate over the degree to which human activity has contributed to (and can do anything about) a changing climate. This impacts people's views on policy decisions central to this topic, such as:

- What types of energy the U.S. uses (fossil fuels vs clean/renewable energy)
- Where the U.S. gets its energy (domestic production vs imports)
- How the U.S. regulates or incentivizes environmentally friendly practices
- Whether the U.S. works with other countries to combat climate change

Both Sides

Republicans generally rank climate change near the bottom of their policy priorities, saying that Earth's climate has been warming and cooling since the beginning of time and that humans' impact on that change is unproven. They argue climate regulations harm the world's fossil fuel-dependent economy (reducing jobs and overall prosperity) without meaningfully impacting the climate. Republicans generally support investing in clean/renewable energy alongside domestic oil and gas drilling as a way to reduce pollution and ensure the U.S. isn't dependent on foreign adversaries for energy.

Democrats generally rank climate change near the top of their policy priorities, often citing a moral obligation to protect the environment for future generations. They argue science has definitively linked human behavior to the warming climate and support government regulations (like caps on emissions and subsidies for renewable energy) to alter human behavior, as well as working with other countries to combat climate change. Democrats generally believe that developing renewable energy solutions and upgrading U.S. infrastructure to be more climate-friendly will create jobs and help, not hurt, the economy.

While there's disagreement over climate change, there's a lot of common ground when it comes to climate/energy policy:

- 69% support America becoming carbon neutral by 2050
- 68% say the country should diversify energy sources but don't want fossil fuels phased out completely
- 66% support the federal government incentivizing wind and solar power production

Terms to Know

- **Clean energy:** Energy sources that do not release greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, including solar, wind, geothermal, and nuclear power.
- **Renewable energy:** Energy sources that naturally replenish themselves, such as solar, wind, or hydropower.
- **Paris Climate Agreement:** An international treaty signed in 2016 by 196 countries that establishes a framework to keep global surface temperatures from rising more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- **Fracking:** Hydraulic fracturing is a process of pumping water, sand, and chemicals deep underground at very high pressures to crack rocks and release natural gas and oil.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris believes the climate crisis is “one of the most urgent matters of our time.” As a Senator, Harris co-sponsored the Green New Deal, a progressive resolution to transition America out of fossil fuels and into clean energy within a decade. In 2019, she said she favored banning fracking but reversed that position in 2024. Harris touts the Biden-Harris admin's Inflation Reduction Act as “the largest climate investment in our nation's history.”

Former President Trump has repeatedly referred to climate change as a “hoax.” While in office, he rolled back hundreds of environmental protections and withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement because it was financially “unfair” to Americans. The U.S. became a net energy exporter while he was president, and he says he's committed to further “unleashing

American energy sources like coal, oil, and gas to ensure affordability for families and security in the world.”

Eternal Perspective

Though we may not all agree on the best way to balance the health of the earth and the needs of humanity, we can pray for wisdom as we seek to be thoughtful stewards of God’s good creation.

“...then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature...[t]he LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”

- Genesis 2:7, 15 (CSB)

Gun Control

An increase in gun deaths and active shooter incidents has kept gun control a frequent and fierce topic of debate in American politics for years.

Let's start with the laws. The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects an individual's right "to keep and bear arms." The Supreme Court has ruled that this right:

1. Is not limited to military service members and veterans
2. Can be lawfully exercised for purposes like self-defense in the home
3. Generally applies in public spaces

Other gun laws vary by state. These include restrictions on who is allowed to buy a gun (e.g., felons, people diagnosed with a mental illness), the process for purchasing a gun (e.g., background checks, waiting periods), and where guns are allowed (e.g., schools, bars).

The gun death rate (which includes suicides, homicides, action by law enforcement, and accidents) is higher in the U.S. than in other developed nations but is far below the rates in several Latin American countries. By some measures, guns surpassed motor vehicles as the leading cause of death among children in the U.S.

So, what does each side say?

Both Sides

Republicans generally favor placing fewer restrictions on gun ownership. They view gun ownership as an important check on government overreach and a tool for self-defense, arguing that criminals are deterred when law-abiding citizens are also armed. Republicans generally criticize gun regulation—arguing that it will only harm law-abiding citizens because criminals will disregard the laws—and advocate for protecting vulnerable places like schools by increasing security, not regulating guns.

Democrats generally believe limiting gun access is the best way to reduce gun violence. They argue current regulation is insufficient because it was instituted before semi-automatic

weapons were widely available and that gun ownership no longer deters government overreach because the military owns vastly more sophisticated weapons than private citizens. They generally support making it more difficult to purchase guns and easier to confiscate guns if there is cause for concern.

There is some common ground:

- 81% support prohibiting a person from having a gun while they're under a restraining order
- 76% support allowing courts to temporarily remove guns from individuals whose relatives report a risk of harm
- 72% support requiring gun owners to lock up firearms when not in use

Terms to Know

- **Automatic Weapons:** Also called “machine guns,” these fire bullets continuously as long as the trigger is pulled. It is illegal to possess a newly manufactured machine gun, but there is a process to legally obtain an automatic firearm made prior to May 19, 1986.
- **Semi-Automatic Weapons:** These fire one bullet each time the trigger is pulled and then automatically load a new bullet. It is illegal to sell, manufacture, or transfer these weapons in 10 states.
- **Assault Weapons:** This is a common term with no clear, consistent definition, though it generally refers to semi-automatic weapons originally designed for military use.
- **AR-15:** The “ArmaLite Rifle-15” is a specific and popular semi-automatic rifle. Originally designed for military use in the 1950s, it can be used for hunting, target shooting, and competition.
- **Bump Stocks:** An accessory to semi-automatic weapons that use a gun's natural recoil to bump the trigger against the shooter's finger, allowing the weapon to fire more rapidly (400-800 rounds per minute, near the rate of an automatic weapon). The Supreme Court ruled

in June 2024 that these do not qualify as machine guns and are legal after an attempt by the Trump Administration to ban them.

- **Background Checks:** Since 1994, federal law has required licensed firearm dealers to confirm the buyer is legally allowed to own a gun. This law does not apply to private gun sales or gun shows (an organized gathering of private gun sellers). Twenty-two states and D.C. require background checks for some or all private sales.
- **Red Flag Laws:** Also known as Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), these laws allow law enforcement, family members, or medical professionals to petition courts to remove guns from those who pose a credible risk to themselves or others. These laws exist in some form in 21 states and D.C.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris supports universal background checks and a ban on assault weapons. She oversees the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which focuses on helping states pass and implement red flag laws and provides \$750 million in funding (from the Justice Department) for crisis intervention programs.

Former President Trump has promised “no one will lay a finger on your firearms.” He vowed to reverse “every single Biden attack on gun owners and manufacturers” and to appoint federal judges who oppose new firearm limits. He supports “commonsense school safety measures” and says gun violence is a mental health, social, cultural, and spiritual problem—“not a gun problem.”

Eternal Perspective

The gun control debate is largely fueled by fear for the safety of loved ones. When you engage with your neighbors, remember to listen for that fear and reflect hope because the gospel delivers courage better than any firearm, or firearm policy, could.

“...fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

- Isaiah 41:10 (CSB)

Gender Policy

A relatively new but increasingly prominent topic of political debate involves policies and laws related to transgender individuals, who make up roughly 0.6% of the U.S. population. The three issues at the forefront of this political debate are:

1. Public bathrooms
2. Sports
3. Medical intervention for transgender minors

States have handled these topics differently. Two states (Florida and Utah) require individuals to use the bathroom matching their sex assigned at birth in all government buildings including schools; 11 states have requirements only in K-12 schools, and 37 states have no relevant laws.

For sports, roughly half of states have laws restricting transgender athletes from participating in women's sports.

The most heavily legislated issue thus far concerns transgender medical intervention (also referred to as “gender-affirming care”) for minors. Twenty-four states have banned medication and surgery to transition minors; 16 states have protected access to such treatments for transgender individuals of all ages; and 10 states have no relevant laws.

Both Sides

The vast majority (86%) of Republicans believe that gender is determined at birth and that sex assigned at birth should be the basis of U.S. legislation. Republicans generally think that allowing transgender individuals to use public bathrooms according to their gender identity poses unacceptable risks to girls and women, that transgender women competing in female sports is a violation of fairness, and that minors are too young to consent to the life-altering consequences of taking medication or undergoing surgery meant to transition genders.

The majority of Democrats believe that an individual’s gender can be different from their sex assigned at birth; this belief is highest among younger Democrats (72% of 18–29-year-

olds). Democrats generally believe that the risks of transgender women using women's bathrooms are minimal, and laws banning transgender people from their desired bathroom, sports team, and healthcare are discriminatory and will cause avoidable mental health problems.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris has made LGBTQ+ rights a key part of her candidacy. In 2024, the Biden/Harris Administration reaffirmed its position that “gender-affirming surgeries” should be legal for minors and broadened Title IX to prevent discrimination based on gender identity (blocked in some states by the courts). Harris’s running mate, Tim Walz (D-MN), is credited with making Minnesota a “trans refuge” and protecting access to “gender-affirming care” for adults and children.

Former President Trump believes gender matches a person’s sex assigned at birth. He says he would cut federal funding for schools pushing “transgender insanity” and undo the Biden administration’s policy including transgender students under Title IX. Trump said, “We will not have men playing in women’s sports.” He also vowed to “stop” puberty blockers and surgery to transition minors, which he equated with child “abuse” and “sexual mutilation.”

Eternal Perspective

When discussing divisive topics, such as gender policy, remember that both your stance and *how* you take your stance reflect on Christ. Being peaceable, gentle, open to reason, and unwavering in the face of culturally hot topics can all be signs of God’s wisdom in us.

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (ESV).”

- James 3:17 (CSB)

Inflation and the Economy

Voters' #1 issue this election is inflation.

Unlike other issues, there is near universal agreement on what success in this area means: low inflation (around 2%). This means prices and wages rise slowly and predictably over time.

Low inflation is closely intertwined with Uncle Sam's other economic goals: low unemployment, growing GDP (Gross Domestic Product is the combined value of all goods and services produced by a country), and a rising stock market.

Here's where Uncle Sam stands right now:

- **Inflation:** 3.0%. This is down significantly from its peak of 9.1% in June 2022 but still above the target of 2%.
- **Unemployment:** 4.1% (3%-5% is generally considered "healthy"). Unemployment surged to 14.8% during the pandemic but quickly returned to 3.5%-4%.
- **GDP:** grew 2.5% in 2023 (slightly below the long-term average of 3.15%).
- **Stock market:** at a record high, up ~25% over the last 12 months (average is ~10%) driven by the technology sector (Nvidia, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Google).

While Republicans and Democrats largely agree on what economic success looks like, there's disagreement on how to accomplish it.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris supports raising taxes on the wealthy and expanding social safety nets. As VP, she has supported several large spending bills (e.g., the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan) to stimulate the economy, as well as efforts to crack down on tax loopholes and regulate away junk fees. As a Senator, she supported tax credits for working-class people and raising public school teacher pay through estate taxes on the wealthy.

Former President Trump supports reducing regulations and cutting taxes. While in office, he signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act which lowered some individual tax rates through 2025 and

reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%. He added relatively few new regulations and worked to roll back some existing regulations. He's repeatedly called the Biden economy a "disaster" and promised to fix it quickly.

Eternal Perspective

Whether the broader economy is struggling or thriving, Christians should give generously of their time, talents, and resources to those in greater need. Seek out opportunities to give what you have away.

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

- Hebrews 13:16 (CSB)

Ukraine and Russia

On February 24, 2022, Russia's President Putin ordered 200,000 soldiers into neighboring Ukraine in the largest European invasion since WWII.

The two countries have a complicated history. Ukraine became fully independent when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and later lost control of the Crimean Peninsula—a historically contested territory in southern Ukraine—to a Russian invasion in 2014. After that, Ukraine increasingly sought NATO membership (a military alliance that includes the U.S., Canada, and many European nations), angering Russia.

In early 2022, Russia quickly captured land and closed in on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, but nine months into the war, Ukraine had repelled the attack on Kyiv and recaptured some land. There have been only modest changes to battle lines in the last twenty months. Death tolls vary widely, though most sources agree it's in the hundreds of thousands.

In the United States, there continues to be widespread condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine but much less unity over what role (if any) Uncle Sam should have in financing Ukraine's resistance.

So far, Congress has passed five bills appropriating \$174.8 billion of aid in response to the war in Ukraine. The majority (\$117.4 billion) is for weapons, equipment, and other military aid, while the rest (\$57.4 billion) is for economic and humanitarian aid.

Both Sides

Democrats generally believe the U.S. should financially support Ukraine's effort to regain lost territory, even if that means a prolonged (and expensive) conflict. Many feel America has a moral obligation to support Ukraine's defense against the larger, authoritarian Russian force.

The Republican party is split. A majority believe the government is overspending on the war in Ukraine and should instead prioritize issues in the U.S. (like the southern border and economy). A minority favor supporting the war because they believe the U.S. is safest when it has a strong presence abroad.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris believes the U.S. should continue to support Ukraine financially. She has been a vocal critic of Russian President Putin over the war and the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. She met with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in June 2024, announcing \$1.5 billion in fresh humanitarian aid.

Former President Trump considers the amount of U.S. support for Ukraine excessive. He pledged to cut support to Ukraine and end the war “within 24 hours” if reelected and has criticized European countries for not spending more to defend Ukraine.

Eternal Perspective

War is a heavy burden that impresses upon us our world’s need for restoration. Jesus came to bear that burden of sin, lighten our load, and restore our world. Pray that those burdened by war would experience restoration and glorify Jesus.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- Matthew 11:28–30

Student Loan Forgiveness

Americans have a lot of education IOUs.

In the past twenty years, student loans in the U.S. more than tripled to \$1.75 trillion, surpassing auto loans and consumer loans/credit cards to become the country's second-largest source of debt (mortgages are firmly in first place at \$12 trillion).

The vast majority of student loan debt (92%) is owed directly to Uncle Sam, while a small portion (8%) is owed to private companies (e.g., SoFi).

The push to have Uncle Sam not ask for his money back began in 2011 during the “Occupy Wall Street” movement, a protest against wealth inequality.

The idea really gained steam during the 2020 presidential campaign when Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) each proposed mass loan forgiveness (\$50,000+ per borrower) and free public college.

Both Sides

Supporters of student loan forgiveness argue that the U.S. government is holding back 43 million of its own citizens, preventing them from starting businesses, having children, and buying homes. They argue that student loans prey on uninformed teenagers and point to times when big businesses have received government bailouts as a precedent for loan forgiveness.

Critics say student loan forgiveness is fundamentally unfair because it uses the tax dollars of people who avoided (or have already paid off) debt to bail out adults who made a legal commitment. They argue widespread loan forgiveness will stoke inflation and won't solve the underlying problem of high tuition and excessive borrowing.

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris supports the forgiveness of some, but not all, student loans. She supported President Biden's attempt to cancel \$10,000 for most borrowers (which was blocked

by the Supreme Court) and expressed pride that the administration has canceled over \$167B for 4.75 million borrows based on public service, disability, and other factors.

Former President Trump opposes most student loan forgiveness for existing loans.

While in office, he supported income-driven repayment plans, forgave loans for permanently disabled veterans, and paused student loan payments when the pandemic began.

Eternal Perspective

No matter your stance on loan forgiveness, Christians are called to manage their own finances wisely and to live generously, giving to those in need. Pray for guidance in doing both.

“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.”

- 1 Timothy 6:17

Abortion Laws

In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision ruled that abortion was a constitutionally protected right. It meant that, for nearly 50 years, there were effectively no restrictions on abortions before the point of viability (23-24 weeks).

In June 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe* in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, allowing each state to determine the legality of abortion and solidifying abortion as a key voter issue.

There are two components to each state's abortion law: a restriction based on *gestational age* and *exceptions*.

If a state has a 15-week abortion ban, it means abortions are legal for any reason prior to 15 weeks of pregnancy and only allowed in exceptional situations at 15 weeks and beyond. Right now, 14 states ban abortions at all gestational ages, nine states & D.C. place no gestational age restrictions on abortion, and 27 states are somewhere in between.

All states have an exception to allow for abortion to protect the life of the mother. Other common exceptions include allowing abortions if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or following the diagnosis of a life-limiting fetal anomaly.

Both Sides

Neither of the candidates are pro-life, that being said...

The majority of Republicans are pro-life, emphasizing the need to protect vulnerable unborn children. Most Republicans agree that life begins at conception and support laws that ban abortion at most or all gestational ages.

The majority of Democrats are pro-choice, emphasizing women's bodily autonomy and abortion as healthcare. Most Democrats believe that abortion should be the mother's choice and support laws that allow abortion for any reason until at least the point of viability (when the baby could potentially survive outside the womb, typically around 23-24 weeks).

There is (some) common ground. Since the *Dobbs* decision, surveys consistently find:

- 80-90% of Americans support exceptions to save the life of the mother
- 70-80% of Americans oppose third-trimester abortions

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris believes abortion should be legal through viability (23-24 weeks) and has supported legislation to “restore *Roe v. Wade*.” While in the Senate, she consistently voted to maintain or expand access to abortions. In March 2024, she visited a Planned Parenthood; it’s believed to be the first time a VP has visited an abortion clinic.

Former President Trump believes the legality of abortion should be left up to the states, and has said he would not sign a federal ban. While in office, he signed executive orders restricting federal funds to international groups that perform abortions and appointed three conservatives to the Supreme Court who eventually helped overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Eternal Perspective

When discussing divisive topics such as abortion, remember that both your *position* and your *posture* reflect on Christ. That means humbly loving and caring for the unborn, single parents, women who have received abortions, and people who passionately disagree with you on this topic.

“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them... But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.”

- Luke 6:32, 35

War in Israel and Gaza

On October 7, 2023, Hamas militants broke through Israel's border, killed 1,200 people, and took 250 hostages back to Gaza. Israel immediately declared war and announced its objectives: destroy Hamas and bring home the hostages.

People around the world and across political persuasions condemned Hamas' October 7th terror attack; support for Israel's military response has been more divided and has shifted over time.

Both Sides

The vast majority of Republicans have been staunchly pro-Israel, saying America's longtime ally has a right to defend itself against Hamas, which is explicitly on a mission to destroy the state of Israel through jihad (Islamic Holy War). Republicans largely blame the high civilian death toll (~42,000 according to the Gaza Health Ministry*) on Hamas, citing the group's strategy of operating out of civilian locations such as hospitals and refugee camps.

Democrats are more divided. From the onset, some progressives were critical of Israel, saying its mistreatment of Palestinians fueled the rise of Hamas. As the conflict has dragged on, Democrats have largely blamed Israel for the civilian deaths and humanitarian crisis in Gaza, causing an increasing number to condemn Israel and call for an immediate, permanent ceasefire. Moderate Democrats tend to support Israel's continued effort to destroy Hamas while urging it to take greater precautions to protect Palestinian life.¹

Candidate Stances

Vice President Harris supports Israel's war in Gaza but emphasizes the need to protect civilians. After meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu in July 2024, she pledged "unwavering commitment" to Israel while also saying she would "not be silent" about Palestinian suffering.

¹ *The Gaza Health Ministry, an agency in the Hamas-controlled government, is the only organization that provides a civilian casualty count. Its numbers are not independently verified, and critics say the Ministry has inflated both the total death toll and the percentage of casualties that are women and children.

She and her husband (who is Jewish) have condemned “the brutal terrorist organization Hamas;” she also expressed empathy for pro-Palestine student protestors.

Former President Trump supports Israel’s war in Gaza but has said they need to quickly “finish what they started,” arguing Israel is “losing the PR war” by allowing the conflict to drag on. He says the attack never would have happened if he were president, citing the Middle East peace deal—the Abraham Accords—brokered while he was in office.

Eternal Perspective

War and the evil it exposes are a terrible reminder that the world is not as it should be. Seek peace where you are and trust that the Lord will end all war in his perfect timing.

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

- Romans 12:18–21